

Re: ZC Case No. 08-06A

I submit the following comment in favor of the proposed zoning change. In particular, I support provisions that would increase flexibility for accessory dwelling units and relax parking requirements for new buildings in certain areas. While these provisions fall short of the full set of reforms the District requires, I support the compromises made and hope the commission puts them in place without further delay. These comments extend my remarks to be made at the Wards 1 & 2 public hearing on February 26, 2014.

DC is a distinct and wonderful city and one I am glad to make my home.

Because of the DC's robust economy and local culture, the District is booming with new residents—as many as 1,000 new residents a month.

These new neighbors are an indication of our city's success and represent tremendous opportunity.

Yet, as many recognize, the District's growing population also presents many challenges. As the population swells, scarce housing is becoming more expensive. Some long-time residents are facing economic circumstances that push them out of their neighborhoods or out of the District entirely.

Fortunately, with this update in zoning, the District's planners are seizing the opportunity to relieve some of the challenges by enacting rules that make sense now and for the future and will help both residents who have just moved in and those who will be in the District for generations.

Allowing *accessory dwelling units* is one of the most practical and immediate ways to welcome new neighbors into our neighborhoods and preserve housing choice and affordability.

- Allowing additional units in basements or carriage houses is one of the best way to accommodate new neighbors while maintaining the architectural character of our neighborhoods—including portions of my neighborhood of Columbia Heights or adjoining Mt. Pleasant, Park View, or Adams Morgan. Adding this critical flexibility will allow historic buildings to be preserved while housing new residents.
- Smaller units, including basements or carriage house units, will add affordable housing options to the neighborhoods. These units not only expand the available supply of housing, but they offer distinct, inherently affordable options. Rents for new units may still be high—these are highly desirable neighborhoods—but rents and costs will be lower for smaller homes within or adjacent to historic buildings than they would be for large single homes. This expanded option which allow, e.g., empty-nesters or seniors to stay in the neighborhood or even in their homes; young families to establish themselves in the neighborhood; and young residents to find affordable options.

While accessory units are one great way to expand the housing stock within the existing neighborhood footprint, for the District to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of new residents projected to move in the coming decades we need to allow for more new housing.

- Wards 1 and 2 have great examples of neighborhoods that mix smaller, single family homes and larger, multi-family and mixed-use housing. Areas of Columbia Heights, Mt. Pleasant or Dupont Circle show how great neighborhoods can incorporate more intensive housing near Metro stations or transit corridors. More mixed neighborhoods like this should be allowed in the District. They offer more housing choices and more affordable options.
- One particular benefit of concentrating housing is that it can allow residents to commute to work and get to their favorite destinations without needing a car. District residents already benefit from the lowest household transportation costs in the region and more residents should be allowed to live in areas where they don not need to drive.
- I am encouraged by the efforts in this new zoning code to reduce burden and expense of required parking new buildings. Reducing this mandate will lower construction costs and reduce housing costs for new homes.

I have had the privilege of living in the District for nearly three years and look forward to living here much longer. But the only way I will be able to stay—to establish my home here, start a family here, be a continued member of this community—is if the District follows through with this plan to expand housing options and improve affordability. I love living in Columbia Heights, but without changes to the zoning rules, I have a hard time seeing how I will be able to afford a home there any time soon. I want to continue living in this exciting neighborhood with great neighbors and great amenities. I want to continue living in a neighborhood where I won't be burdened by needing to drive to all my destinations.

I support these zoning changes because it will create more opportunities in great neighborhoods like mine, for myself and for all other residents.

Planning is the job of ensuring our city is successful now and far into the future. As I plan my own future in the District, I am encouraged by the

changes in this update, which are important steps to maintain my neighborhood's vital quality of life as the city population grows. I support the reforms in this proposal and wish the new rules did even more to increase flexibility, expand housing options, and allow more development in targeted neighborhood centers.

Finding ways to ensure strong neighborhoods, affordable housing, and unique character as the District grows are planning imperatives. While comments you have received show that the changes are jarring for many residents, inaction should not be an option. Inaction can only lead to ballooning housing costs and displacement of all but a few wealthy newcomers and few older homeowners. For our neighborhoods to support future generations of families and remain diverse places welcoming to all, we must plan for future changes.

I support this zoning revision because it will prepare my neighborhood for these changes.